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## Legislators deserve praise for tobacco buyout

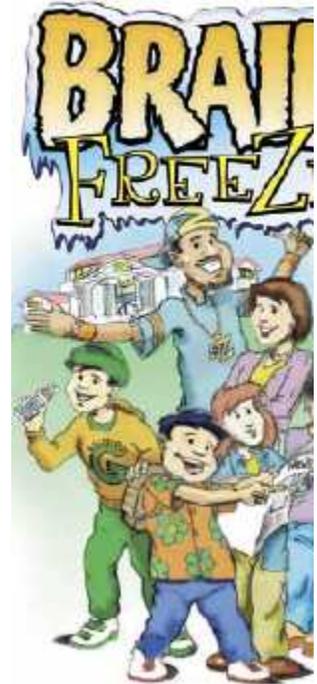
By Sam Moore, [sgaines@bgdailynews.com](mailto:sgaines@bgdailynews.com) -- 270-783-3246

Saturday, February 05, 2005

Passage of the tobacco buyout by Congress last year was a historic achievement for Kentucky which will benefit all aspects of tobacco dependent communities in Kentucky and across the tobacco belt. The raw numbers are impressive – \$2.5 billion over 10 years to be paid in every region of our state, the creation of at least 7,000 new jobs and a chance for Kentucky farm families to invest in their own future, either through more streamlined tobacco production or a variety of alternative enterprises.

In terms of the value of the economic stimulus for Kentucky, the buyout ranks with the top economic development initiatives of our time. New automotive plants or new technology enterprises have served as strong advancements for individual regions of the commonwealth, but the buyout spreads its high-value impact to virtually every county, west to east.

As good as the news was last October, when our Congressional delegation overcame huge obstacles to win the buyout's passage, some of the luster has seemed to go away with the decision of the tobacco companies to renege on payment of last year's Phase II payments to farmers. The companies went to court in North Carolina to reclaim money already pledged, and paid in, to the trust that administers the Phase II program. That was an incredibly callous and ill-advised decision on their part that threatens to do real harm to families who had counted on the payments to meet operating and lending



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obligations.

Farmers have rightly expressed outrage over the withholding of these payments, and we may now be seeing movement in Frankfort which could provide a remedy for the companies greed. That is a commendable objective and one that deserves support from lawmakers from all across the state.

I am hopeful that farmers in Kentucky will eventually receive their Phase II payments that should have been paid at the first of the year.

At the same time, I hope that the anger felt within the farming sector over the payment issue won't spill over into a blame game directed toward our capable U.S. senators and representatives. The members of our delegation gave their all in the drive to enact a buyout, and that achievement should in no way be diminished because of actions by tobacco company lawyers.

We owe our Congressional members our gratitude for their hard work over the past few years that led to passage last October of the buyout.

Likewise, let us support the work of our governor and state legislators who are striving to right a wrong and restore the Phase II funds that are due our farming families.

— Moore is president of Kentucky Farm Bureau.

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